

***NYSIUS SENECTIONIS* (SCHILLING) (HEMIPTERA: LYGAEIDAE)
NEW TO THE BRITISH ISLES**

PETER J. HODGE

8 Harvard Road, Ringmer, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5HJ,

AND DAVID A. PORTER

Leyeshurst, 76 London Road, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 3DD.

On 20.ix.1992 we visited a sheltered heathy clearing in Holman Wood, part of Brede High Wood, East Sussex (TQ7920) in order to study the exceptionally interesting insect community which was present there at that time. The weather was warm for late September, with an early afternoon maximum of about 21°C, and by sweeping mixed vegetation, which included young birch *Betula*, greater bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus* Cav., St John's wort *Hypericum*, ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* L. and ling *Calluna vulgaris* (L.) Hull, several interesting species of bugs were discovered.

These included two specimens of the nationally scarce (Na) shield-bug *Eurydema dominulus* (Scop.) (Pentatomidae), one swept by each of us; a single example of *Corizus hyoscyami* (L.) (Rhopalidae), swept by David Porter, a species usually associated with sand dunes which appears to be very rare and perhaps not permanently established in East Sussex; and a single female *Stictopleurus* (Rhopalidae), swept off St John's wort *Hypericum* by Peter Hodge.

Two specimens of an unfamiliar *Nysius* (Lygaeidae), a male and a female, were swept, probably off ragwort flowers, by Peter Hodge. On 26.ix.1992 we revisited the site and David Porter swept a single female of the *Nysius*.

The Lygaeid bugs were readily determined as *Nysius senecionis*, using the 'key to British *Nysius*' by Kirby (1986). This key was extracted and modified from the 'key to the European Lygaeidae: Orsillinae' (Dolling, 1985). The title of Kirby's key is somewhat misleading and implies that all six species are British. However, this is not the case since *N. senecionis* has evidently not been previously recorded from either Britain or Ireland. Furthermore, the species has never been included in a check list of British Hemiptera, although it is known to occur in the Channel Islands.

Species of the genus *Nysius* have gained the reputation of being very difficult to identify and many entomologists have collected material which has not yet been named. It is therefore possible that *N. senecionis* is standing unidentified in a few British Hemiptera collections.

N. senecionis is readily distinguished from all other British *Nysius* by measuring the relative length of the first segment of the posterior tarsus, which is not or only slightly longer than the second and third segments together (Fig. 1). In all other British *Nysius* species, the first segment is distinctly longer than the second and third segments together (Fig. 2).

In addition, the buccula in *N. senecionis* is of even height throughout and tapers very abruptly posteriorly (Fig. 3), whereas in all other British species it is higher anteriorly than posteriorly.

These two characters make *N. senecionis* the most distinct and easily identified member of the genus in Britain.

The distribution of *N. senecionis* includes most of central and southern Europe, and parts of North Africa, but it has not yet been recorded from Scandinavia (Stichel, 1957-59).

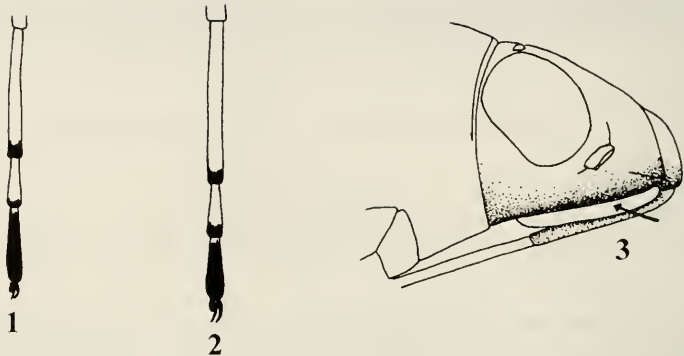


Fig. 1. Metatarsus of *Nysius senecionis*. Fig. 2. Metatarsus of *N. graminicola*. Fig. 3. Head, lateral view, of *N. senecionis*. Reproduced, with permission, from Kirby (1986).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Dr Stephen Judd of the Entomology Department at Liverpool Museum for confirming the identification and for his helpful advice, and Peter Kirby for allowing the reproduction of illustrations from his key.

REFERENCES

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NOTE ADDED IN PROOF

Additional British records of *Nysius senecionis* (Schilling) (Hemiptera: Lygaeidae) from Hampshire and Kent.—Since the discovery of this new British bug in East Sussex in September 1992 I have kept a sharp look-out for it in other localities. Until August 1996 all attempts to rediscover the species met with failure, but on 8.viii.1996 I found several specimens of *N. senecionis*, including pairs in-cop, on flowers of ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* (L.) growing in sandy soil at Hyde Common near Fordingbridge, South Hampshire, SU1712. On 15.viii.1996 the species was swept in numbers off ragwort at Shorth Heath Common, SU7736, and in a sandy field near The Warren, near Oakhanger, SU7735, both in North Hampshire. Finally, on 30.viii.1996, I found a single male on the ground near ragwort growing on sandy ground near Halling, West Kent, TQ7063. All indications are that *N. senecionis* is now firmly established in many parts of southern England.—PETER J. HODGE, 8 Harvard Road, Ringmer, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5HJ.

Editorial comment.—It appears that *Nysius senecionis* may be spreading and even be moderately common in some parts of south-east England (P. Kirby, pers. com.) and hemipterists are urged to examine recently caught *Nysius* specimens. The editor would welcome short notes in support of this possible expansion of the bug's range.

RICHARD A. JONES.